

Family Volunteering

Give it a try!

The **City of Bloomington Volunteer Network** strongly believes in **the great impact family volunteers make in our community** and we are committed to increasing volunteer participation by area families through our family volunteer program Family Matters.

Bloomington has a **strong tradition of volunteerism**. We are energized by the challenge we are setting out to Bloomington families of all configurations to engage in more volunteer activities. When families volunteer together, they have the opportunity to **learn together** and **grow together**. Through service, families are able to **connect with the community** and to meet the needs of others. In addition, families often find that they **receive even more from their volunteer experience than they give**. When families come together in service, they **build a stronger family and a stronger community**.

We invite you and your loved ones to experience the joy of service by volunteering today!

~The City of Bloomington Volunteer Network Staff



GETTING STARTED

Start volunteering today. Below you will find seven easy steps to begin volunteering as a family!

STEP 1: Follow your common interests. Discuss with your family the kinds of volunteer activities you all would enjoy doing together. If your family has children, pay particular attention to what they have to say. Consider activities that will allow them opportunities to lead.

STEP 2: Determine what times are available for your family members to volunteer. Try creating a family volunteer calendar and setting aside specific times for service together.

STEP 3: Use "Idea Central," in this packet, to brainstorm ideas.

STEP 4: Once your family has ideas, take the next step and get connected. If you don't have a specific place where you would like to volunteer, contact the City of Bloomington Volunteer Network at (812) 349-3433 to find a specific opportunity, or check out our searchable listings: www.bloomington.in.gov/volunteer.

STEP 5: Contact an agency or project where your family would like to volunteer and ask to talk with the volunteer coordinator. Discuss your interest in volunteering and ask any additional questions your family may have

STEP 6: Once your family finds a project, GO FOR IT! Make all the necessary arrangements and start volunteering as soon as possible.

STEP 7: When you complete the project, review the experience as a family. Talk about what you did on the drive home and during meal times. You may wish to take photos and start a family volunteer journal to reflect on the experiences that you have. Volunteering as a family is something to be proud of!



Make a difference in our community. In this section you will find ideas for family volunteering projects. If your family sees something that would be interesting, try contacting an agency that would have such an opportunity. Agency contact information and further assistance is available by contacting the City of Bloomington Volunteer Network at (812) 349-3433 or by visiting us on the web at www.bloomington.in.gov/volunteer.

CHECK THE WISH LIST!

***Regardless of what interest area your family decides to focus on, there are always opportunities to support your favorite agency in need by checking the Community Wish List, an annual listing of the material needs of non profit agencies in the Bloomington area. Your family can help by collecting these requested items either by shopping for them, holding a collection drive, or fundraising to purchase items. A family fundraising project, such as a garage sale can make this an achievable goal. The Community Wish List can be viewed at www.bloomington.in.gov/volunteer.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is defending a cause or giving support to a person. There are thousands of opportunities for families to be involved in advocacy-related activities.

- **Write** letters to politicians about issues that affect families.
- **Attend** city council, county council, or school board meetings. Be prepared to present your views on issues that are important to your family.
- **Find an issue** your family is passionate about, study it, and make presentations to local organizations.
Examples of issues include:
 - Young people
 - Families
 - Voting
 - Environment
 - Human rights
 - Volunteerism
- **Assist individuals** living with developmental disabilities.
- **Help those new in the community** locate and gain access to the resources they need for success.
- **Get trained** in conflict mediation and use your skills to help others.
- **Provide office/administration support** - such as bulk mailings - to agencies that advocate in the court system.
- **Walk** in parades and staff booths at community events to distribute information about different issues.
- **Organize** a voter registration drive in your community.





ANIMALS

Working with animals can be a fun and rewarding volunteer opportunity for families of all ages. In Bloomington and the surrounding area there are volunteer opportunities with everything from animal welfare to wildlife rehab!

- **Groom animals** at a local animal shelter.
- **Provide foster care** for animals needing special attention - this may include newborn animals or animals rescued from unsafe conditions.
- **Train** your family pet so that you can take it for visits to a nursing home and spend time there with the residents.
- **Walk** neighborhood dogs.
- **Organize** a "dog wash" as a fundraiser for a local animal shelter or humane society.
- **Volunteer** to feed birds and clean cages at a wildlife sanctuary.
- **Assist** with classes that teach horseback riding to individuals with disabilities.
- **Get trained** to give educational presentations about the animals at an animal rescue organization. Give your presentations on site or out in the community at places such as schools.
- **Organize** a "pet parade" to entertain residents of a nursing home.
- **Take youth on day trips** in the country (eg. young people in foster care) to explore the wildlife and learn about the different animals, birds, and even bugs.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Volunteering is a great way for your family to be at the heart of the culturally rich environment of Bloomington.



- **Volunteer on site** as a family at a historical society, science museum, or children's museum.
- **Arrange** a storytelling hour at a local library, community center, or nursing home.
- **Get involved in community theater** - either on the stage or behind the scenes.
- **Re-shelve books** or organize special displays at the local library.
- **Volunteer to be a greeter or tour guide** at a local historical site or museum.
- **Draw pictures** and make other art projects to brighten the day of residents at nursing homes or a soup kitchen.
- **Write skits** about issues affecting young people - drugs, alcohol, eating disorders - and perform for school assemblies and after school programs.
- **Usher together** at a theater.
- **Make seasonal decorations** to be used at a local senior center, soup kitchen or nonprofit organization.
- **Put on skits, dance, or share your musical talents** at a nursing home or hospital.
- **Make costumes** for a play being put on by local schoolchildren.
- **Organize** "living history" days at area schools, working in conjunction with community elders.
- **Host an exchange student** in your home.
- **Create and perform** a puppet show at a local library.



CHILDREN

Does your family love spending time with children? What better way to show that love than by volunteering with children!

- **Provide free babysitting** to parents in your neighborhood struggling to work or attend school.
- **Facilitate activities** - sports or other games - for community family nights.
- **Play with children** and engage them in learning activities at social service agencies.
- **Become a mentor** to a young person.
- **Organize or facilitate parties, games, and special events** for the children at local women's shelters or the children on waiting lists for services.
- **Build or renovate** a community or school playground.
- **Assist in the nursery** at a place of worship.
- **Make welcome baskets** for new children in the school or neighborhood - include things like a welcome card, school calendar, and list of fun things to do as a young person in your town.
- **Provide temporary housing** for children whose parents are facing crisis.
- **Read to children** in school or daycare centers.
- **Organize a fundraiser** to send children to summer camp.
- **Be a friendly visitor** at a children's hospital.
- **Donate books and toys** for homeless children.
- **Guide field trips** for children in summer programs.
- **E-mentor a child** - provide support and friendship through regular email communication.



COMPANIONSHIP ACTIVITIES

Companionship activities are those activities that connect members of the community, particularly elderly and developmentally disabled individuals, to others with the intent of providing assistance or simply being a friend.

- **Play games**, do crafts, or put on skits at a local senior center.
- **Assist residents** in assisted living communities with their weekly shopping trips.
- **Provide meals and company** for a homebound neighbor during regular visits.
- **Develop a family-to-family relationship** with those new to the community, such as family-to-family mentoring.
- **"Adopt" a grandparent** - a neighbor or someone living in an assisted care community nearby. Help them put out the trash, rake leaves or drive them to their doctor appointments.
- **Lead outings** for nursing home residents.
- **Visit residents** of a group home.
- **Throw birthday parties and holiday celebrations** at local nursing homes. Try theme parties - like a Hawaiian Luau or Back to the Fifties Bash!
- **Pick up** individuals who are unable to drive and involve them in your faith community activities.
- **Provide friendship** and assistance to new people in your neighborhood. Take them on tours of local shopping areas, attractions, and community gathering places.
- **Provide musical entertainment** at a senior center.
- **Become a surrogate family** for adults in your community with developmental disabilities. Invite them to participate in family outings and other fun events.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Opportunities for service in education and literacy include both those opportunities that promote learning and also those that support education and literacy activities. These may take place in or out of a formal learning environment.



- **Tutor** youth or adults.
- **Assist families** working to improve their English language skills.
- **Deliver library materials** to homebound patrons.
- **Teach reading or writing** to adults and children at a local non-profit organization.
- **Help in a computer lab** or teach computer skills to those who desire to learn.
- **Teach short-term enrichment courses** in a topic of your interest to area school children.
- **Read and write letters** for those who need extra assistance.
- **Volunteer at school carnivals** to help raise money to support local educational efforts.
- **Be a summer-learning friend** - volunteer during summer breaks to tutor students who need extra help with their studies.
- **Accompany students** on class field trips.
- Teach life-skills - cooking, paying bills, doing laundry - to developmentally disabled adults.
- **Speak to classes about your experiences** - travels, jobs, volunteer positions, etc.
- **Be classroom assistants** for early childhood development classes.



ENVIRONMENT

Do you care about the environment, in your community or on a global level? Motivate your family to help you make a positive difference on the environment!

- **Organize** a neighborhood recycling drive.
- **Clean up a nearby park**, beach, hiking trail, or other public area.
- **Create and maintain a community garden** to beautify an unused plot of land.
- **Spruce up local parks** with additions such as walking paths, foot bridges, or picnic areas.
- **Plant trees or wildflowers** in your neighborhood.
- **Participate in community-wide spring clean-ups**, traditionally occurring on or near Earth Day in April.
- **Collect** samples of native plant wildlife to create educational displays.
- **Lead nature education programs** on a topic of your family's interest at a local nature reserve.
- **"Adopt-a-_____"** - choose a park, street, stream, or anything you and your family want to beautify and keep clean.
- **Help with removal of invasive plants** at local nature centers and reserves.
- **Organize a neighborhood clean-up party** to clean vacant lots, stream beds, and forest land.
- **Perform maintenance tasks** or lead educational groups at a local historical farm.
- **Help** residents of a nursing home decorate flower pots and plant flowers to enjoy year round



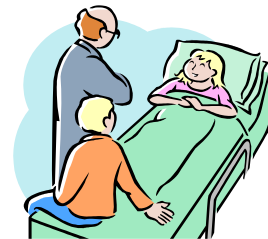
HANDYPERSONS

Do you have a skill you can use to improve the lives of others? Are you great at "fix-it-upper" projects and enjoy working with your hands? This section has the volunteer opportunities for you.

- **Volunteer to repair or improve** the facilities at a social service organization in the community.
- **Clean houses** or shovel driveways for those in need.
- **Teach** woodcraft classes to youth.
- **Rake** a neighbor's yard.
- **Build** ramps to make homes and buildings accessible to all people.
- **Work** with low-income families to help home building efforts.
- **Partner** with another family to paint the home of an elderly neighbor or another in need.
- **Organize** a window washing, spring-cleaning, or yard clean-up day for a nonprofit or social service agency.
- **Teach** a sewing class in a local school.
- **Plant** flowers and perform upkeep on a garden at a community center.
- **Give** manicures and style hair for nursing home residents.
- **Help** design and construct sets for community theater groups.
- **Perform** basic cleaning/routine maintenance at a nonprofit that works for a cause your family supports.
- **Visit** elderly neighbors and perform basic repairs and safety inspections.

HEALTH SERVICES

Health services encompasses a variety of volunteer opportunities at a number of sites, such as hospitals, care homes, and treatment centers.



- **Read** to children or the elderly at your community hospital.
- **Provide** respite time for a caregiver.
- **Entertain** residents at a local hospital.
- **Provide** transportation to someone who has a regularly scheduled medical need.
- **Visit** with nursing home residents during mealtimes.
- **Volunteer** in a playroom at a local hospital.
- **Help** in the gift shop at care centers.
- **Deliver** meals, mail, or flowers to patients at a neighborhood hospital.
- **Give** hand massages to nursing home residents.
- **Befriend** an out-of-town family who has a family member staying in a nearby hospital.
- **Deliver** hot meals to homebound individuals.
- **Escort** residents of a nursing home to and from activities, meetings, meals, etc.
- **Visit** children at local hospitals and play games and read stories with them.
- **Help** with the promotion of blood drives in your community.
- **Perform** a puppet show or organize a sing-along at a children's hospital or a local nursing home.

HOMELESSNESS/HUNGER/HOUSING

Your family can volunteer to make a difference in these three important issues facing our community and world.



- **Package and distribute** food at a local food pantry.
- **Set up** a clothing exchange.
- **Organize** a "closet cleaning" day on your block or in your neighborhood and donate clothes, furniture, and other items to a homeless shelter or have a garage sale and donate the money raised.
- **Decorate** shoeboxes and fill them with sample size hygiene products, then donate these boxes to a local shelter.
- **Serve food** at a homeless shelter.
- **Volunteer** at a local shelter to play games or just mingle with the residents and children.
- **Assemble** disaster relief care kits.
- **Make centerpieces** and other decorations for food kitchens to use on their tables.
- **Plan** a theme party at a shelter.
- **Coordinate** a drive to collect needed items such as food, clothing, hygiene products, or school supplies.
- **Help** newly arrived immigrants stock their cupboards by collecting food, kitchen supplies, and toiletries for them.
- **Make** a large number of sandwiches and donate them to a local shelter - the shelter can hand them out to the residents.
- **Sort and organize** goods donated to neighborhood thrift stores.
- **Make birthday bags** to be handed out to children staying at a local women's shelter.
- **Prepare food** for volunteers building houses for people.



HOLIDAY OPPORTUNITIES

While volunteers are needed 365 days a year, there are unique opportunities during the holiday season. Many of these, being short-term in nature, are a great starting point as your family begins to volunteer together.

- **Shop** - Take elderly people or others with limited mobility shopping for the holidays.
- **Wrap gifts** at a senior center.
- **Adopt a family** for the holidays - provide them with food, gifts, or meet their specific needs.
- **Distribute hot chocolate** to holiday bell ringers.
- **Clean a homeless shelter** for the holidays.
- **Run a "sing-a-long"** at a local school, senior center, or shelter.
- **Help the elderly** write and send holiday greeting cards.
- **Organize** a community wide "holiday tea" and donate the money raised to an organization that does important community work.
- **Participate** in the gift-wrapping fundraisers at local shopping centers.
- **Assist** during holiday parties at after-school care programs - entertain, bake treats, or just have fun!
- **Prepare and serve** meals at a local shelter on or around the holidays.
- **Bake cookies** or other treats and share them with homebound individuals in your community.
- **Carol or entertain** as a family at a local nursing home or group home.



- **Arrange** a holiday party for a local school that highlights the different celebrations of a variety of cultures.

SHARE YOUR TALENT

Does your family have a special skill? Volunteering can take any form. Find the opportunity in which you can improve the lives of others by doing what you already do best!

- **Teach computer skills** to young people or the elderly.
- **Assist with video production** at your community access TV station.
- **Paint a mural** over graffiti.
- **Mend clothing** for residents at a local care center.
- **Be a "tele-friend"** - use your phone skills to regularly call and talk to a homebound individual.
- **Share your language** - If your family is bilingual, help with translation at local health care facilities or wherever needed.
- **Teach cooking classes** for youth.
- **Play games or cards** with seniors at a local senior center.
- **Teach chess to young people** at an after-school or summer program.
- **Assist with arts classes** taught to residents of nursing homes.
- **Sew or knit** hats, scarves, and mittens for area youth.
- **Make meals** for volunteers building homes or providing other services in your neighborhood.
- **Teach dance lessons** - line dancing, flamenco, ballroom, etc. - to community members.
- **Sing, play a musical instrument, or perform** a drama at a community nursing home.
- **Create promotional materials** - flyers, brochures, websites, etc.- for a non-profit agency.

SPORTS AND FITNESS

Are you an active family? Share that energy and ability with the greater community!



- **Organize community volleyball or softball teams** - help your community to interact and build relationships through sports.
- **Teach young people to swim.**
- **Lead canoeing** or other outdoor adventure trips for disadvantaged youth.
- **Spruce up community athletic properties** by painting fences and pulling weeds.
- **Participate in walks/runs** that support the issues your family cares about.
- **Be an exercise buddy/mentor** - have a young person go on bike rides, hikes, and other outdoor adventures with your family.
- **Take the elderly bowling.**
- **Work at a concession stand** during athletic events to raise money for an organization your family supports.
- **Volunteer to lead activities** at a youth summer camp.
- **Lead a physical activity** - exercise class, dance lesson, games - at a nursing home or youth center.
- **Coordinate or lead activity nights** at a local gym.
- **Coach or teach** your fitness skill to others.
- **Teach a new sport to area youth** - help them develop confidence through the sport.
- **Organize a fundraising event** to buy sporting equipment for low-income youth to use so that they can participate on area teams.

Top 10 Reasons... To Volunteer As A Family

- #10** Spend quality family time together
- #9** Meet real community needs
- #8** Teach children the values of service and community involvement
- #7** Spread positive energy and hope
- #6** Learn new skills
- #5** Meet new people and establish friendships and connections
- #4** Develop family communication
- #3** Make the world a better place
- #2** Enrich family relationships and encourage family unity
- #1** It's fun!

